

Message Text

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S E C R E T TEHRAN 5390

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IR
SUBJ: DISCUSSION WITH SHAH ON IRAN'S DOMESTIC PROBLEMS

REF: TEHRAN 4355

1. DURING MY JUNE 6 AUDIENCE WITH THE SHAH, I FOUND HIM FAR MORE RESILIENT AND CONFIDENT IN HIS DISCUSSION OF IRAN'S DOMESTIC PROBLEMS THAN IN OTHER RECENT DISCUSSIONS (REFTEL). IN PART, THIS WAS PORBABLY DUE TO DEMONSTRATED FAILURE OF OPPOSITION ELEMENTS TO ARRANGE "GENERAL STRIKE" THEY HAD CALLED FOR JUNE 5 AND IN GREAT PART TO RECENT VISIT WHICH SAH HAD MADE TO MASHAD WHERE HE MET WITH ISLAMIC LEADERS.

2. HE SEEMED CONVINCED THAT NATIONAL FRONT LEADERS HAD NO FOLLOWING AND THAT THEY WERE UNABLE TO GENERATE RESPONSE FROM ISLAMIC FAITHFUL. HE SAID HE WOULD " LEAVE THEM ALONE" IN THE FUTURE BECUASE THEIR ONLY AUDIENCE SEEMED TO BE THE BRITISH PRESS.

3. HE WAS RATHER PHILOSOPHIC IN DISCUSSING THE PROSPECT OF CONTINUING TURBULENCE IN IRAN. I SAID THAT THIRTY-FOUR YEARS AGO THAT SAME MORNING, I HAD BEEN AT THE NORMANDY BEACHES AND, BY COMPARISON, THE TURBULENCE HERE WAS BENIGN. HE PICKED UP FROM THE OBSERVATION TO SAY THAT, IN LOOKING

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BACK OVER THE PAST THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS, THERE HAD ALWAYS BEEN TURBULENCE AS CHANGES TOOK PLACE. THE NET RESULT HAD BEEN AN OBVIOUS IMPROVEMENT IN IRAN. HE HAD BEEN REQUIRED TO CHANGE HIS LEADERSHIP STYLE SEVERAL TIMES AND IT WAS OBVIOUS HE WOULD HAVE TO DO SO AGAIN. THE NEW STYLE MIGHT BE A LITTLE MORE UNTIDY, BUT THAT WAS PERHAPS THE ONLY WAY YOUNG PEOPLE COULD GET INVOLVED IN THE GOVERNMENT PROCESS.

4. COMMENT: MY IMPRESSION IS THAT THE SHAH HAD DECIDED ON A GENERAL POLITICAL COURSE WHICH HE IS PREPARING TO IMPLEMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE REMOVAL OF NASSIRI AS HEAD OF SAVAK IS A PRECURSOR OF THAT COURSE AND THE RUMORED CHANGES IN BOTH THE CABINET AND THE RASTAKHIZ PARTY ARE PART OF THE SAME PATTERN. THE IMPRESSION HE CONVEYED IS THAT THE NEW PATTERN WILL BE LESS AUTHORITARIAN THAN IN THE PAST, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON ATTEMPTING TO APPEAL TO THE YOUTH OF THE COUNTRY.
SULLIVAN

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